

Avery County Economic Development Committee

April 30, 2018

Minutes

The Avery County Economic Development Committee (EDC) met at 5:00 pm on Monday, April 30, 2018 at the Avery County Commissioners Board Room at the Avery County Administrative Complex, located at 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC 28657.

Present for the meeting were:

Larry Hazen, Phillip Barrier, Susan Siirila, Ken Walter, Roy Reynolds, Trey Oakley, David Pollard, Carmen Lacey, and Melynda Pepple.

Absent: Tim Phillips, Mark Parlier.

The meeting began at 5:05 pm, and was moderated by chairperson Ken Walter.

Mr. Walter opened the meeting by welcoming, on behalf of the group, new members David Pollard and Melynda Pepple.

A motion was made by Roy Reynolds to accept the March 2018 minutes, a second was offered by Trey Oakley and the motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Barrier reviewed information on high speed internet. He stated that as far as providers, the field has been narrowed to two (2) Requests for Proposals. The committee reviewing the RFPs met two weeks ago—this is on the \$200,000.00 grant that was received.

Mountainview Campground, located at Ingalls, has engaged Country Cable from Spruce Pine, NC to bring cable to that area. Mr. Barrier stated that the service will run almost as far as Riverside school, and that it will cover main road areas, but will most likely not be available to homes on side roads. Mr. Barrier stated that it took nine (9) months to get to the point where we are with the grant, and that it is worked on each day.

Mr. Reynolds asked if the county had investigated services by dish network companies. Mr. Barrier responded that the cost/affordability has been the primary issue with dish services. Mr. Reynolds added that dish network versus running cable may be an alternative. He will contact HughesGen to learn about availability. Mr. Barrier stated that the question becomes 'can an Avery County family afford to add another monthly bill' for such a service.

Mr. Barrier spoke about a \$3,000,000.00 grant applied for by Skyline Skybest, which was not received. He stated that the grant was not allocated because Skyline subscribers did not

have/show enough interest. They are currently soliciting information from individuals and if enough interest is shown, they can re-apply for the grant.

Mr. Barrier and Mr. Oakley will attend a meeting with the NC Outdoor Recreation Industry representatives at the High Country Council of Governments office in Boone on May 1, 2018.

Mr. Barrier stated that agents of Food City grocery store have contacted him recently regarding use of the old Lowes Foods building in Newland. Food City had turned down a request from Avery County about six (6) months ago, but then reached out to us again recently.

Ms. Lacey asked if there were other Food City stores in North Carolina, as it is primarily a Tennessee based company.

Mr. Walter stated that we needed to make a decision regarding refilling the position on the EDC left vacant by Mark Parlier's resignation. Mr. Hazen indicated that he was of the belief that we had already reached a decision, and that the vacancy would be filled by Richard Honeycutt. Mr. Barrier stated that each candidate who had submitted an application for appointment to the EDC had been called and asked if they were still interested and available for consideration. Mr. Hazen asked if all candidates who had submitted applications were still available. Mr. Barrier stated that they were. He also stated that the list of available candidates will be presented to the Avery County Commissioners and that a candidate will be appointed by the commissioners from the list. He added that Ms. Lacey will be on the list, and that the other candidates who will be on the list are: Keith Hoilman, Clayton Harpold, Richard Honeycutt and Jessie Pope. Mr. Walter and Mr. Hazen indicated that what should occur next would be for us to recommend one candidate, and then leave it up to the commissioners to appoint a member. Ms. Lacey stated that since Mr. Harpold is running for county commissioner that he should not be eligible for selection. Mr. Walter concluded by stating that we (EDC) will submit a recommendation for Ms. Lacey's reappointment to the group, and then leave the decision up to the county commissioners.

Old Business:

Mr. Walter inquired about the list of available properties. Mr. Barrier advised that he continues to work on updating the list.

Mr. Walter advised that a total of \$450.00 has been added to the budget for funding a Junior Achievement program at the high school. This will not begin this school year, but the goal is to get a Junior Achievement class going in the 2018-2019 school year.

Mr. Walter and Ms. Siirila will participate in a presentation for a class of junior high students on May 22, 2018. This presentation will be held at the NCWorks Career Center in Newland and will cover career choices, resume preparation and interview skills.

Ms. Siirila advised that since the last EDC meeting, that she has spoken with Rebecca Bloomquist, of High Country Council of Governments, regarding the writing of grant proposals. She advised that Ms. Bloomquist stated that HCCOG will be available to assist if the time comes that we need to submit a grant proposal.

New Business:

Mr. Oakley has indicated that he wishes to continue on the Youth/Athletics/Recreation sub-committee, but that he does not wish to chair the sub-committee. The other members of the sub-committee are Mark Parlier and Roy Reynolds. A determination was made to wait on appointing a new person to chair the sub-committee until the open position (Parlier's) has been filled.

Mr. Walter stated that he would like for the EDC group to form a new education sub-committee. Mr. Hazen made the motion; a second was offered by Mr. Reynolds, and the motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Hazen pointed out that Mr. Water would have to serve as an ex-officio member. Ms. Siirila agreed to participate on an education sub-committee along with Mr. Walter.

Mr. Hazen spoke of Zach Burnop, a local businessman, who is involved in producing videos, commercials and moving toward feature films. Mr. Burnop owns 3BFilmz in Avery County. Mr. Hazen stated that he had asked Mr. Burnop why he has based his business in Avery County, and that Mr. Burnop replied "Because I love it here—I grew up here." Mr. Hazen suggested that Mr. Burnop may be considered a "poster child" for Avery County. Mr. Walter stated that Mr. Burnop will be a guest speaker at the May EDC meeting.

Mr. Walter has met with Allen Cook, director of the small business center for Mayland Community College. Mr. Cook will be invited to speak at the June EDC meeting.

Mr. Walter, Mr. Hazen and Mr. Reynolds attended a meeting in Morganton, NC at which the learned about resources available to businesses in North Carolina. Mr. Hazen stated that a great deal of good information was available at the meeting. At the meeting, he spoke with a representative of the Career Development office at Appalachian State University. He shared information with the representative about the Avery County logo, and information about what the ASU students had done for Avery County in development of the logo. Mr. Walter added that they had spoken with the aforementioned representative's colleague, also in attendance at the meeting. They learned that the EDC may benefit from this talk in that they may be willing to share photos from their extensive library.

Ms. Lacey asked if there was a link to help entrepreneurs together with business resources. It was determined that this could be investigated, and that a link may be added to the EDC link on the Avery County webpage.

Discussion followed regarding Allen Cook and the small business center at Mayland Community College. Mr. Walter stated that Mr. Cook had shared with him that he typically provides more assistance with entrepreneurs and business owners in Mitchell and Yancey Counties, than he does with those in Avery County. Mr. Hazen inquired as to the reasons for this. Ms. Siirila advised that it may have to do with the fact that there is more manufacturing companies in Yancey County. The group agreed that this is a matter we can discuss with Mr. Cook further when he is a guest speaker.

Mr. Barrier talked about the fact that Yancey County, Burnsville in particular, has become a 'bedroom community' for those living in Asheville. He noted that housing costs in the Asheville area have increased to the point where some residents are moving farther out and commuting to work in Asheville. He stated that the Madison and Mars Hill area are basically 'full' and that Burnsville is becoming more popular as far as housing for those working in Asheville.

Mr. Hazen spoke about his participation in Leadership Avery. He stated that the group will have its third meeting on May 1, 2018. He noted that they participated in a very good group building activity at their first meeting. At the second meeting, they learned about educational facilities in the area. Through the second meeting, Mr. Hazen was able to have conversations with Bryan Taylor, Superintendent of Avery County Schools, and with John Boyd, President of Mayland Community College. Mr. Hazen also noted that he had talked with Frances Magruder, who is involved in an EDC start-up group at Grandfather Golf and Country Club. He noted that this group is comprised of a group of wealthy individuals who are interested in seeing the economy in Avery County grow.

Mr. Hazen provided a talk/laptop presentation from the marketing sub-committee. The written content is included as an attachment to this document.

Trey Oakley left the meeting at 6:00 pm. Before leaving, he stated that he will speak with Jessie Pope, Grandfather Mountain, regarding an upcoming soccer event, and that he will attend the May 1, 2018 meeting of the NC Outdoor Recreation Industry with Mr. Barrier.

Mr. Hazen made a motion for the formation of an agricultural sub-committee. Ms. Lacey offered a second and the motion was approved unanimously. Mr. Walter appointed Mr. Pollard to the sub-committee.

Discussion followed regarding the development of a Tourism Development Authority (TDA) in Newland. Mr. Barrier stated that he did not believe that the Avery County Commissioners

would approve of a TDA in Newland, as it would pull revenue from Sugar Mountain and Beech Mountain.

Mr. Pollard stated that tags used on Christmas trees will be printed soon. He suggested that we investigate putting the Avery County logo on the tags, and he will speak with representatives at Crop Production Services about this.

Mr. Walter asked Mr. Barrier to provide EDC business cards to Ms. Pepple and Mr. Pollard.

Discussion followed regarding two new restaurants that have opened in the county: SeasonsNC in Newland and Elevations in Banner Elk.

The next EDC meeting is scheduled for Monday May 28, 2018.

The meeting adjourned at 6:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan P. Siirila

Marketing Committee Report
April 30, 2018

Old Business

- Public Hearing makes doing business with Toby Advertising, Lamar advertising, and Sallie Woodring official.
- However, we're on hold on further promotional efforts until we get the green light from the lawyers on using our logo. This includes both magazines (Our State & Carolina Mountain Living), utilization of photos from other photographers, the completion of the logo video, and implementation of phase II marketing planning
- All aspects of the initial billboard have been completed and it should go up by mid-week next week provided the vendor's contract has been received by Toby Advertising.
- The second billboard is a digital one from Lamar Advertising in Lenoir on Hwy 321 which I hope will be finished and up by the end of the week. We'll have to use the same photos on the first billboard because we don't have any others approved.
- Our second photo has been submitted for approval with no word yet.
 - Cole Finch will be redoing the video pictures we have the license to use. We need 25-30 photos, and we have about six selected from Todd Bush and Sallie Woodring. Melynda and I met and have selected another 8 possibilities from the chamber's extensive database.
 - A county Facebook page has been approved, but no progress has been made at this point to my knowledge. I've volunteered to be editor. Facebook page is a big part of our social media marketing strategy and will allow us to post news that isn't allowed on the county's webpage.
 - Ken and I had lunch with Eron Theil of the May Coalition and Zach Burnop, 3BFilmz in an effort to be the two parties together and discuss how all of us could work together.
 - We have received some editorial coverage at no charge from Carolina Mountain Living in their spring issue.
 - I had brief meeting with Bryan Taylor, the new school superintendent, and with John Boyd, President of Mayland Community College. More about this in the new business segment.

New Business

- Meeting with Spectrum TV to explore using cable TV as part of our advertising strategy and mix. I've received two proposals to date, but I'm still negotiating.

- On community outreach, I've made contact with what amounts to an EDC at GMCC. One of our challenges is to get every EDC, TDA, and Chamber in the county pulling together for the benefit of the whole thereby fulfilling our mission to be an umbrella organization for all.

- I would like to consider the creation of a spokesman or "poster child" in our future marketing meetings.

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- I'm happy with our direction with the utilization of local photography for our promotional efforts, but one of the biggest challenges of any advertising campaign is to break through the noise to differentiate your product from those of your competitors. To that end, I've contacted a popular artist in Blowing Rock who paints local subjects.

Major Marketing Opportunity

Current Status

- There are two distinct sides of the county.
- One is anchored by Banner Elk, and the other by Newland.
- Banner Elk is vibrant with many restaurants, recreation opportunities, and natural resources.
- Newland has limited recreation opportunities and lacks the number of opportunities for fine (or better dining), and limited natural resources.
- Riverwalk in Newland may be better utilized as an attraction that would draw people to Newland. Suggestions for maximizing Riverwalk include family movie nights, bands on Friday nights, kite flying contests, etc. Also, better and more regular maintenance and landscaping to keep the Riverwalk area groomed and attractive needs to occur. On the matter of special programs at the Riverwalk area, Mr. Barrier relayed that property that Riverwalk moves through and beside belong to the Church of Jesus Christ and to J.P. Faw, owner of the Lowes Foods property. Mr. Barrier stated that nothing was ever put in writing regarding use of Riverwalk by these entities. He also stated that if the property adjacent to the church were to be used to special programs, that permission would need to be sought from the church.